



What You Can Do to Reduce Pollution In Your Area

There are actions that we, as homeowners and citizens, can take to reduce pollution in our neighborhoods. Simple preventative measures taken by us, as individuals and good neighbors, can make a difference and will contribute to cleaner streams, rivers and bays.

TYPES OF POLLUTION

Pollutants can be classified into three general categories. Natural pollutants are organic materials such as leaves, grass clippings, pet waste and soil sediment. Chemical pollutants are items such as detergents, fertilizers, motor oil, gas and grease. The last category is one we all see - litter. Plastic bags, bottles, wrappers and cigarette butts are just some of the litter we see that gets into and pollutes our environment.

EFFECTS OF STORMWATER POLLUTION

Pollutants have numerous short- and long-term negative effects on our ecosystem. Toxic pollutants kill or injure plants and animals that live in and around our waterways. Litter clogs waterways and can lead to flooding problems by blocking our stormwater systems. Over fertilization of our yards contaminates our lakes and retention ponds causing algae blooms which reduce the oxygen level required for a healthy lake. These are just some of the examples of the impact of pollutants. The common reason why pollutants enter our environment is that people allow it to happen. We cause pollution.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

There are numerous things we can do to reduce pollution and improve our water quality. Here are just a few recommendations:

✓ Pick up trash and debris from around your homes and neighborhood. This includes yard waste such as leaves and branches. This natural debris gets into our stormwater systems and blocks drainageways, prematurely fills in our lakes and ponds, and adds to the organic buildup that causes algae blooms. Pet owners, pick up and dispose of your pet waste. This waste adds

to the natural contaminants (fecal coliform) in our waterways.

✓ Properly dispose of chemicals. Motor oils, cleaning fluids, fertilizers, paints, and radiator fluid are just some of the toxic chemicals that the average citizen uses each year. Avoid spills by using drip pans. Dispose of used and unwanted chemicals utilizing the County's Household Chemical Collection Program.

✓ Maintain your automobiles, lawnmowers and homes. If you want to see the extent of our problems, take this one simple test. Just look at the ground where cars park in a



Oil spill from a poorly maintained vehicle.

large shopping center. You will notice puddles of oil and radiator fluid on the ground that leaked from poorly maintained vehicles. And to think that these vehicles are there for only a short time! Imagine the amount of pollutants these people are releasing into our ecosystem every time they drive. Are you contributing to the problem?

✓ Apply fertilizers properly. One of the biggest pollutants is fertilizers that are not applied in the correct amounts. High amounts of fertilizers can cause algae blooms in lakes and retention ponds. This algae buildup reduces the oxygen levels in the water which in turn kills fish and other wildlife. Test your soil before applying fertilizers to see what amounts are needed. Soil test kits are available at the Virginia Cooperative Extension in York County. Fertilizers work best if applied in the fall months of September, October and November in proper amounts. Contact the Virginia Cooperative Extension at 890-4940 for information on proper fertilizer application procedures.

✓ RECYCLE, RECYCLE, RECYCLE. Help reduce the buildup of reuseable waste in our landfills by using the County's recycling program.

WHERE TO GET HELP

We are not alone in working to prevent the pollution of our waterways. York County, the collective communities of Hampton Roads and the State of Virginia all have programs to assist us in minimizing pollution. In addition, their web sites contain more information on how we can reduce pollution. They are funded by our tax dollars to support and help us maintain a cleaner environment. Take advantage of these programs and help reduce the amount of pollution that enters our environment.

For more information, contact:

- York County Department of Environmental and Development Services: www.yorkcounty.gov/eds/htm
- York County Stormwater Advisory Committee: www.yorkcounty.gov/stormwater/index.htm
- Hampton Roads Storm (HR STORM): www.hrstorm.org/
- Virginia Cooperative Extension (York County): www.yorkcounty.gov/vce/index.html
- Virginia Peninsula Public Service Authority: www.vppsa.org
- Department of Conservation and Recreation: www.state.va.us/dcr

For information on area programs, contact:

York County Waste Management Center: Has information on the County's leaf collection, recycling, garbage collection and hazardous waste disposal programs. 890-3780

VPPSA Household Chemical Collection Program: Collects and properly disposes of household chemicals five times a year. Call for times and locations. 259-9850

Virginia Cooperative Extension (York County): Excellent web site with useful information on how to maintain lawns, shrubs and trees. The local office personnel provide classes and assist in identifying horticultural problems. This office also has numerous handouts to assist homeowners and residents in maintaining their lawns and gardens. 890-4940

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer efforts aimed at saving our precious waters abound in Hampton Roads. Below are examples of some of these programs that you can volunteer to support.

✓ Clean the Bay Day - Join the thousands of volunteers who gather each June to clean stretches of shoreline and inland waters fouled by litter and debris. The trash not only looks bad, but poses a serious health threat to fish, birds and other marine life.

✓ Adopt-a-Spot - Organize groups adopt specific streets or public areas for litter clean-up.

✓ International Coastal Clean-Up - Coordinated by the Center for Marine Conservation, this worldwide coastal clean-up and marine data-collection campaign happens every September.

✓ Earth Day - These April events are a great place to find ways to get involved in local environmental efforts.